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ABSTRACT

The capabilities and potential of videotex, a two-way interactive communication and information retrieval service, are briefly described in this fact sheet. Videotex refers to a two-way linkage between databases and individual consumers in home or office. It is currently being used for information retrieval, transactions (e.g., bill paying, banking), messages, telemonitoring (home security), and computing with software. Because research, field tests, and operating videotex systems throughout the world have been aimed primarily at commercial markets, instructional materials are few. However, Great Britain, Canada, and France are currently engaged in aggressive videotex development efforts and its use is likely to become commonplace in these countries at a more rapid pace. A listing of commercial videotex and teletext (one-way information) systems, the country in which they are located, their area of use, and test and operating dates are provided as well as a 6-item bibliography on the subject. (KC)

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VIDEOTEX 1983

AN ERIC FACT SHEET

APR83

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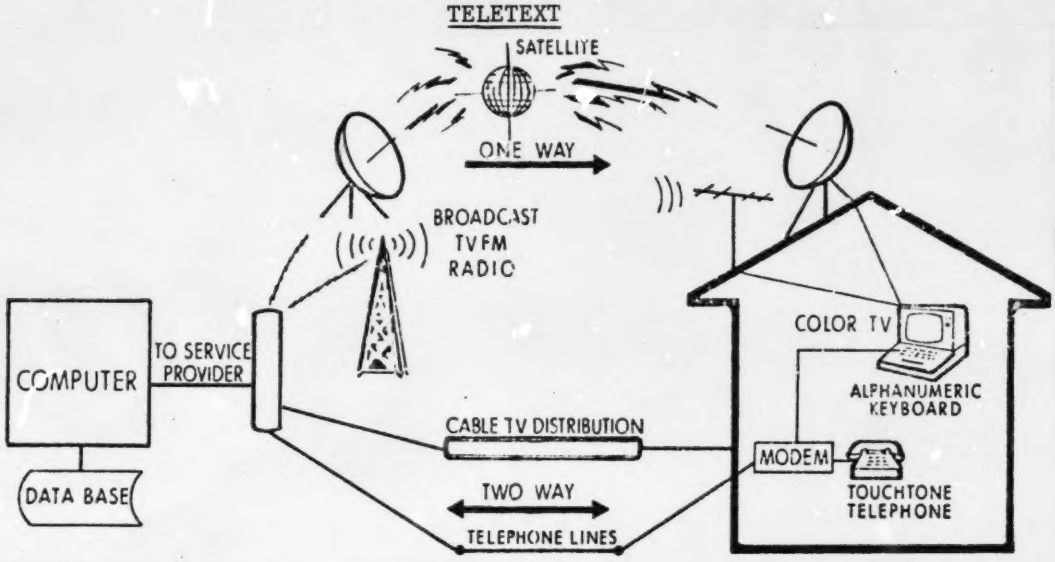
VIDEOTEX 1983
--An ERIC Fact Sheet--

What is videotex?

Videotex is the generic name given to a new two-way interactive communication and information retrieval service. This service makes information stored in computers accessible to homeowners at very low cost; it can also connect the homeowner to other locations that are part of the service network. Videotex is capable of displaying individually selected pages of text and pictorial or graphic material on the screens of specially adapted television monitors.

Technically, videotex refers to a linkage between databases and individual consumers in the home or office. This linkage is accomplished through existing communication lines, creating a complex network of computers, communication hardware, and remote terminals. The home terminal is typically an ordinary television set equipped with a decoder and a keypad on cable systems, or a keypad and modem when the television is connected to the system through telephone lines. There are a number of possible ways to make these links occur. In fact, systems with names sounding like videotex are usually trade names given to these different hardware and software combinations. These commercial systems are generally not compatible with each other. Viewdata is used as an alternate term to videotex in Britain and the United States to describe only two-way systems.

Teletext is used as a generic term to describe a one-way information service in which the user makes choices from a limited number of information "pages" available from a continuous broadcast loop. A specific "page" is "grabbed" out of the broadcast. In ERIC, the term videotex is used as a subject heading to describe the contents of documents and journal articles cited in its indexes: Resources in Education and the Current Index to Journals in Education. As such, this term can include articles devoted to teletext as well as videotex.



How is videotex being used?

A broad range of services has been pilot tested in the United States and implemented more extensively in other countries. Tydeman et al. (1982) categorize the services by the generic functions they perform. Educational applications will probably represent special adaptations to these functions. Educational usage is an undeveloped potential. At present, current uses include:

- Information Retrieval: news, weather, sports, electronic newspaper, adult self education, encyclopedia, and library services
- Transactions: banking, finances, electronic checking, catalog shopping, bill payment
- Messages: electronic mail, community bulletin board
- Telemonitoring: home security (fire, theft, medical alerts, and energy control) and polling
- Computing: software service for home computers such as financial tax analysis packages, video games, and computer assisted instruction.

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When will videotex be widely useable for educators?

Available research, field tests, and operating videotex systems throughout the world have been aimed primarily at the commercial potential of consumer services. Consequently, instructional materials that have been utilized essentially represent isolated trial cases. Such efforts have not systematically developed integrated programs of instruction which select videotex as one of many technological tools available to solve specific instructional problems.

The technology of videotex hardware, software, and carrier links is rapidly and constantly changing. The variety of incompatible "brands" of videotex, regulation, technical innovations, competing technical systems, human adaptability factors, and extremely high front end costs will slow the spread of videotex systems. Economic feasibility is determined by the number of homes equipped to accept at least one of the potential videotex services. Market penetration levels sufficient to make videotex economically feasible for widespread educational uses by traditional education institutions will probably not occur until the mid-1990's. Continuing adult education and retraining are markets with significant and unpredictable potential. Other technologically advanced countries are engaged in more aggressive development efforts, notably Britain, Canada, and France. Use of videotex is likely to become commonplace in these countries at a more rapid pace.

Where are the videotex systems being used?

Name	Country	Operated by	Location	Videotex (V) Teletext (T)	Test (T)/Date Operating (OP)/Date
ANTIOPE	France	Post & Telecommunication (PTT) Authority & TDF (-TV)	Nationwide	V	OP/1978
ANTIOPE	USA	KSL-TV	Salt Lake City, UT	V	
		KCET-TV (PBS)	Los Angeles, CA	T	T/1982; OP/1983
		WGBH-TV (PTV)	Boston, MA	T	T/1982
		Ottoway Newspapers (Dow Jones)	Danbury, CT	T	T/1982
CEEFAX	U.K.	British Broadcasting Co. (BBC)	Nationwide	T	OP
PRESTEL	U.K.	British Post Office	Nationwide (& Europe Wide)	V	OP/1979
PRESTEL	USA	IBM	(Telephone Subscription--National)	V	T/1983
QUBE	USA	Warner Communications	Columbus, OH	V	OP
SOURCE	USA	Telecomputing Corp. of America (Reader's Digest)	Nationwide (via Telenet)	V	T/1979; OP/1980
TELIDON	Canada	Communications Canada, Dept. of Communications	Nationwide	V &/or T	T/1980
TELIDON	USA	Time, Inc. (Local Newspapers & Local Cable Co.)	San Diego, CA; Orlando, FL; New York City	T (Satellite)	T/1982
TELIDON	USA	WETA-TV (PTV) and Alternate Media Center of NY	Washington, DC	T	T/1982; OP/1983
TELIDON	USA	ATT & Knight Ridder (Viewdata Corp. of America)	Florida Coral Gables Nationwide	V	OP/1983; T/1982 US 1985

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Woolfe, R. Videotex: The new television telephone information services. London: Heyden, 1980.

Prepared by Michael Olson, Syracuse University April 1983